

Noosa Shire Council stakeholder management

Summary

Noosa Shire Council is exposed to sea-level rise and inundation hazards. These could lead to physical impacts to the community and erode Noosa's reputation as a prime holiday destination. In response, the Council is developing a Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (CHAS) that will focus on hazards such as storm surge, coastal erosion and sea-level rise, and on their impacts on people, infrastructure and biodiversity.

This process needs to be underpinned by an appropriate knowledge base and so Noosa Council undertook a CoastAdapt test case project to develop in-house capacity to understand climate change risks and the challenges of related stakeholder engagement. Through two workshops, key staff members accessed relevant material from CoastAdapt such as the 'Sea-level Rise and You' tool. The snapshot outlines the outcomes of both workshops and the test case project as a whole.

Noosa Shire Council, on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, is exposed to sea-level rise and inundation hazards. These hazards could result in damage and physical impacts to the community, but could also erode Noosa's reputation as a prime holiday destination.

The Council has received funding from the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) through the QCoast₂₁₀₀ initiative to undertake the development of a Coastal Hazards Adaptation Strategy (CHAS) for the Council and the community. The CHAS will focus on coastal hazards including storm surge, coastal erosion (see Figure 1) and sea-level rise, and the impacts on people, property, infrastructure and biodiversity. It will form the core of a whole-of-shire climate change adaptation plan that will be developed in 2018.



Figure 1: Coastal erosion in Noosa's 'dog beach'. Photo: © Noosa Shire Council.

Keywords

Noosa, sea-level rise, inundation, CHAS, stakeholder management, test case

The initial funding aims to support the first round of work (i.e. phases one and two) that forms the basis of the CHAS development. During these two phases Council staff will identify existing knowledge gaps, determine funding allocation, and how, when and what conversations are needed with internal stakeholders, the community and topic experts. This process needs to be underpinned by an appropriate knowledge base. To this end, Noosa Council undertook a CoastAdapt test case project to develop in-house capacity to understand climate change risks and the challenges of related stakeholder engagement. Two workshops have been held so far.

The objective of the first workshop was to ensure internal members of the project working group (PWG) could acquire a basic understanding of climate change projections for the Noosa region, and their consequences from a risk perspective. This was achieved by reviewing a range of climate change material, including the 'Sea-level Rise and You' tool available on CoastAdapt (see Figure 2), and the first-pass risk assessment template 2.

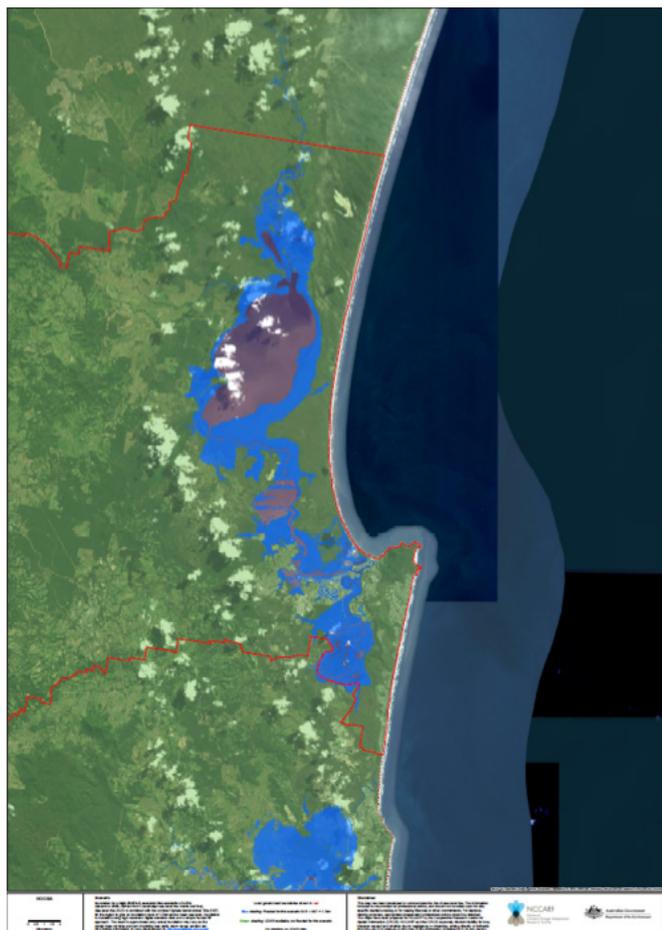


Figure 2: Sea-level rise inundation maps (Very high emission scenario at year 2050) of Noosa Council which was used in the workshops. Source: © CoastAdapt.

The [infographic](#) on climate change risk assessment basics was also used to communicate fundamental considerations of a risk assessment process. Workshop participants at this first workshop included a diversity of staff, which is important for gathering a broad range of information from across the organisation as well as building capacity and support for adaptation planning. Staff participating included the roles of: Principal Strategic Planner, Economic Development Manager, Program Coordinator Climate Change Adaptation, Property & Facilities Manager, Community Facilities Manager, and Project Officer Planning & Infrastructure.

Processes during the first workshop included:

- supporting staff to identify and discuss what climate change means for Noosa and its community
- analysing the specific risks – staff had different levels of awareness of these risks. For example, the 'Sea-level Rise and You' tool was used to show that it's not just beaches that will be affected, but that anything low-lying adjacent to the lower reaches of Noosa River is likely to be inundated routinely in future (see Figure 3)
- prompting discussion of the current ad-hoc consideration of long term climate change in decision making, whether by Council or community members
- building internal capacity and priming PWG members for more in-depth risk analysis with specialist consultants undertaking works for the CHAS.

The second workshop also used the 'Sea-level Rise and You' tool. However, on this occasion the workshop participants (internal PWG members only) considered several specific areas of the Shire. Then they participated in a role-playing exercise lead by a facilitator, Dr Mark Gibbs. The purpose of the exercise was to get participants to think about the kind of responses various stakeholder groups would likely have to the hazard mapping and risk assessment results published by the Council, as well as the CHAS project more broadly. The second workshop included the following staff with the roles of: Principal Environment Officer, Economic Development Manager, Program Coordinator Climate Change Adaptation, Property & Facilities Manager, Community Facilities Manager, and Project Officer Planning & Infrastructure.



Figure 3: Noosa River mouth showing the development located in low-lying areas. Photo: © Noosa Council.

The key outcome from this workshop was the realisation that stakeholders routinely misinterpret flood and inundation maps, and that for affected stakeholders, physical damage to assets is often not the largest impact. For businesses, loss of service and loss of business are key impacts, and threats to property values are of key concern to home owners in at risk areas.

The overall outcomes of the test case project were:

- facilitating key Council staff to understand the types of risks posed to the Noosa community and assets
- supporting key Council staff to have the capacity to better manage their consultants, and better manage the dissemination of new information generated by the consultants to the community.

Further reading

Noosa Council's website on climate change: <https://www.noosa.qld.gov.au/climate-change> (accessed 9 June 2017).

The QCoast₂₁₀₀ program website: <http://www.qcoast2100.com.au/> (accessed 9 June 2017).

This Snapshot was prepared by Mark Gibbs of Coastal Adaptation Services and Grant Hinner of Noosa Council as part of a series of test cases conducted to assess CoastAdapt's performance and utility in real life adaptation situations.

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